

## **Commander's Action Lines, June 2009 – December 2009**

**Sir, Too many cars go speeding through the Ellsworth Base Exchange parking lot with no clear crosswalks for people to avoid the cars. I'm afraid someone will get hurt. What can be done to improve safety there?**

The speed limit in the Ellsworth Base Exchange parking lot is the same as for all lots on base—15 miles per hour—and pedestrians continue to have the right of way. The 28th Mission Support Group has agreed to repaint the crosswalk lines that faded with our winter weather, and also increase security forces patrols there to ensure we are following the right procedures—safely.

**I live on base and I'm required to keep my lawn mowed and trimmed to below 4 inches in height. I have no problem with this and think it gives off a good military image to all visitors. However, I have noticed common area grass is much taller than the normal standard. The grass on the playgrounds has been more than a foot tall at times. I consider this to be unsafe for the children who would like to play there. Tall grass brings critters and critters bring snakes, etc. Is there anything that is being worked to keep the common area in better shape?**

Due to contract limitations, common areas in housing have a 4-10 inch height requirement. Until it reaches 10 inches it is not out of the contract standard. The contractor had been delayed recently due to the large amount of rainfall as the grounds were too wet to cut and there was standing water prohibiting mowing. Thankfully, the improvement in weather has allowed them to catch up.

**With the understanding that this (is) based (on) my opinion, I question why the current Commercial/Vendor gate is not our primary gate for all POV traffic and base residents, in the matter of convenience and capacity. Use of this gate by privately owned vehicle traffic might seemingly increase efficiency by improving flow, reducing congestion and could cut-down on drive time by an additional 5-minutes between this installation and Rapid City. It might also mitigate the issue of our base personnel being questionably targeted/stalked by the Box Elder police department even when we're driving in accordance with local laws and speed limits; albeit hearsay, I was made aware that in years past this was a serious issue brought about by the need for a source of revenue since casinos at the time were not authorized which eventually resulted in local government intervention. Is this simply due to the fact that we've spent funds to build a Visitor's Center at the entry control point? Why couldn't these two gates swap rolls *[sic]*? Larger/bulkier freight and commercial vendors have an easier route for access from the roadway extending from Exit 67 as opposed to Exit 64. Or perhaps leave the gates as is, but introduce/reintroduce a West gate which could route traffic around the south or north sides of the runway instead, giving base residents and POVs direct access to the highway from the West Gate Road?**

The Bismarck gate is designated in-bound for contracting vehicles due to specific, AFI-driven security requirements. Those requirements make it the best choice for commercial traffic. However, you will be pleased to know we are in the process of awarding a very high-end project, which will reconfigure all three gates. The Liberty Gate and Patriot Gate will have two inbound lanes to the installation for use during peak traffic hours. The Bismarck gate will remain commercial traffic only.

I haven't heard of Box Elder Police "stalking" base personnel. If you don't want to get stopped, then don't speed. If anyone is truly being stopped for no reason, then I want to know about it, but so far I've seen nothing to indicate this is the case.

**I'm writing to voice my concern about the gate security personnel, specifically at the school gate. This morning (30 Jun) I arrived at the base at 6:45 a.m. and traffic was backed up from the school gate to the Post Office. By the time I got through the gate and arrived at my duty section, it was 7:10 a.m. Now, I understand high traffic times, exercises security personnel may be performing, and I'm sure other things that can slow traffic, but, when I finally reach the gate and have my I.D. checked, there is one individual checking I.D.'s and another is sitting in the guard house. When I voiced my frustration at work, a co-worker said she came through at 6:30 and she also noted there was one individual sitting in the building with one person outside checking I.D.'s. I do not know if something was going on that prevented both individuals from clearing traffic, but it was quite frustrating to have to wait that long. It seems I will have to leave for work at least an hour early to make the 20 minute trip to work to be on time. Thanks for hearing me out and, by the way, I do appreciate the protection provided to the base by our security forces personnel, but feel maybe some improvement may be had concerning this issue.**

Thanks for the feedback. There should have been at least two people checking identification cards for morning traffic. Security forces will ensure this happens in the future. I periodically drive out to check the line myself and have only seen short waits the two or three times I've been out there. Let me know if this continues to be a problem.

**I live in base housing and fully understand the requirement to keep my yard trimmed within certain standards. However, just a short time ago it literally rained for more than a week straight. The one day the sun did shine was a duty day and while I was at work I got cited for my grass being too tall. Is there any stipulation that says housing residents can at least have some time to take care of this before being ticketed? It's impossible to mow your grass if it's constantly raining and then on the one day the sun shines I can't physically be mowing my yard and at my work center at the same time.**

I'll send an email to encourage commanders and the housing office to take these conditions into consideration. They are in the best position to know your requirements and the environment. We shouldn't expect our folks to mow in the rain for an hour, like I saw a Chief doing last week. But, please continue to do your best to adhere to standards.

**Ellsworth is known for some of its harsh weather conditions, and yet Airmen living in the dorms don't have protection for their personal vehicles. If a hail storm hits the cars become damaged. When blizzards hit, cars are either damaged or totaled. I would not make a complaint unless I had some sort of suggestion to correct it. At the Shopette there is a covering above the gas pumps. If these same coverings were placed in the dorm parking lots they would help a lot.**

Unfortunately, this is just cost prohibitive. I understand your concern but unfortunately this isn't going to happen.

**What is the magic date Centennial personnel can get on the waiting list to get into Rushmore Heights?**

6 months prior to lease expiration (which will be sometime between Dec 10 and Jun 11). We are working with Hunt to ensure rental agreements and pricing are available at that point so occupants can make an informed decision as to whether or not they want to remain in Centennial Estates.

**Why can't SNCOs move into Red Cloud homes now since there are vacancies?**

There are 29 total units on Red Cloud. We have 9 vacancies with advanced applications from 7 inbound personnel. We will wait until after PCS season is over (mid-September) and then make a determination about redesignating these units if we have excess. There are also 7 vacant units on Sitting Bull which are designated for SNCOs.

**If someone is currently certified as a daycare provider, will certification requirements change now that they are located off base?**

When Centennial becomes off-base housing we will no longer license day care providers in those homes. The residents of those homes will have to abide by any rules the landlord (Hunt) sets concerning running a business in the residence. If the landlord allows them to provide family child care then they will be governed by the state laws for licensed home day care.

**Are we entitled to a dislocation allowance because we are being kicked off base?**

Partial DLA is authorized for a forced move.

**About a year ago, we were told retired members were not allowed to eat at the dining facility. Is that still the case at Ellsworth and if so why?**

Good timing. Last week we changed this policy to allow retirees to eat at the dining facility each day, all meals. Airmen will have priority, but I'm sure there's enough to go around.

**I would like someone to explain why my time is not important. I had an appointment at the base clinic and had to wait 35 minutes in the exam room before seeing someone. The**

**representatives at the counter were talking to each other about EPRs and did not notify me that anyone was running late. When my provider arrived, it was a civilian PA who had to leave the room to ask the doctor how to handle my medical concern. I left my teenager at home recovering from oral surgery to go to my appointment. I should have been told about the 30 minute delay so that I had the option of rescheduling which would have put the PA back on time for future patients.**

How much time a doctor needs with each patient isn't fully predictable, and when the doctor is in with you we want to make sure you get the treatment you need no matter how long it takes (without rushing through your concerns). That said, our staff can and will be more active (and more professional) in the future in keeping you informed about the situation so that you can make decisions together about the problem.

### **What's going on with the 'Communications' AFSC conversion?**

Since receiving this question, a townhall meeting was held for all 3A, 3C, and 2E personnel to address how the AFSC conversions are determined, how this will effect career progression, and any specific training requirements for the new AFSCs. It didn't go into specific moves or specific people - a draft with that information has been provided to your commanders for them to review. Supervisors will continue to funnel down details as they are developed. If you missed this town hall or more are needed, talk to your supervisor to pass that need to the Communications Squadron.

### **If I'm deployed, why can't I still compete for awards at my home station?**

By AFI, you need to be at Ellsworth for more than half the award period to be nominated for an award. This is because deployed personnel compete for awards at their deployed location. If this isn't happening because of the oddity of a specific type of deployment, let your supervisor know so we can work it with that agency. Our Airmen deserve to be recognized for the great work they are doing overseas, but folks at home are doing commendable work as well.

### **If I won a quarterly award, why can't I compete the following quarter?**

This is an interesting one--I didn't know the answer until we did some homework. Basically, the AFI precludes quarterly winners from competing in multiple quarters to make sure more folks have a chance to win throughout the year. Of course, quarterly winners can win annual awards.

### **I'm a new Airman but am interested in how I could get Edwards as my next duty station. What's the process?**

The normal way to do this would be to apply for a Base of Preference (BOP). To do so you must have an approved Career Job Reservation (CJR). Four-year enlistees are eligible for a CJR between the 35th and 43rd month of their enlistment, while six-year enlistees are eligible between the 59th and 67th month. You can apply for a BOP online through Virtual Military Personnel Flight (vMPF) (which also says the specific eligibility requirements). For at least the

next 3 years, focus on doing your current job to the best of your ability--putting bombs on target. Getting the mission done is the best way to garner consideration for future desires.

**During a recent visit to the gym I took my daughter with me and we proceeded to the family room, upon walking in I noticed that the area where the children play in was disgusting. I went to the front desk and informed them about the room, they looked at me in a “So? What’s the big deal?”. Mind you this wasn’t the first time I had asked for it to be cleaned it has actually been an ongoing problem over a few months. Now I don’t know what exactly the job entails working at the fitness center but you would think they would maintain some standards in cleanliness especially now with flu season coming in. I would appreciate your help with this matter, thanks.**

You're right, the kids play area needs to be clean. The Fitness Center staff keeps the facility clean by completing a daily checklist in addition to a contract cleaning service. In response to your inquiry, they've revamped their checklist, to include toy sanitation and closer monitoring. The closer monitoring will ensure the child play area is more promptly cleaned after each customer's use to guarantee this situation does not happen again. They realize this is a big deal. Thanks.

**I saw the Army Air Force Exchange Service was selling Hydroxycut products but I thought they were banned. Why is the BX selling products we shouldn't use?**

Hydroxycut products were recalled by the Federal Drug Administration in May due to adverse liver effects. They were pulled from the shelf at that time. Since then, Hydroxycut products have been reformulated and are back on the shelf. It's now legal and available, but this should lead us to the next discussion on the risk folks take when they take these kinds of supplements.

**I’ve recently been told I have to wear long-sleeve blue shirts on Mondays. Why can’t I wear whatever shirt I want?**

When we were directed to wear blues on Mondays, COMACC’s amplifying guidance was that wing commanders would pick a standard uniform combination for their location so that all members would wear the same uniform. We have chosen to wear the traditional short sleeves in the summer and long sleeves in the winter. I see no reason to deviate from that traditional pattern—like I told your commanders, it’s not like we live in Miami.

**The skate park is always locked and there's a lot of broken glass and trash inside of it. Can this be looked into?**

**Response:** We checked the park and it's open and clean. Occasionally the park may get locked for safety or to perform maintenance and repair on the ramps. Normally, the Outdoor Recreation staff monitors this area in conjunction with their weekly cleaning of the pavilions, so skate your heart out.

**I heard the Air Force is going to change its policy by banning Airmen from smoking. Is this true and does it mean cigarettes will no longer be at the Ellsworth Base Exchange?**

While we encourage our Airmen to quit smoking, I haven't heard of anything as extreme as this rumor. This is bull.

**My unit had to give up our client support administrators to the 28th Communications Squadron and now we are being tasked to patch our own computers. What's the deal?**

There's been some confusion with the CSA move. Patching computers will be done by the CSAs no matter what unit they're in. The Communications Squadron will fix this.

**I heard the Air Force is getting more manpower. Does this mean Ellsworth is going to get more people?**

Last year the Air Force raised its end strength back to about 330,000 personnel. This approximate increase of 14,000 people was spread between many stressed career fields. Here at Ellsworth, we gained 164 maintenance billets, which was a big win but it did not increase in any other areas.

**I'm concerned that with no alterations shop in the Ellsworth Base Exchange that I cannot get free alterations like I've had at previous bases. What's the deal?**

First, the Army Air Force Exchange Service has solicited several times to try to get a laundry and alterations shop in the BX, but none in the area have found it to be cost effective. AAFES will keep trying as this is a service they would like to provide. In the meantime, you can still get free alterations but it's a little more complicated. When you buy new blues (service coat and pants for enlisted, just service coat for officers) you can get an alteration slip from a BX employee. Bring the alteration slip and the receipt from the alteration shop of your choice to the customer service desk and you'll be reimbursed.

**I just read this story in the Rapid City Journal. I live on-base in base housing. Are my children going to have to walk to school now?**

[http://www.rapidcityjournal.com/news/article\\_8e7ce684-c40d-11de-a4d9-001cc4c002e0.html](http://www.rapidcityjournal.com/news/article_8e7ce684-c40d-11de-a4d9-001cc4c002e0.html)

No. Our on-base buses are paid for by Air Combat Command and are not included in this decision.

**I just went to the gas station on base and was told I need to prepay for my gas, with cash, check or credit card. I told them I wanted to write a check. Then she asked me how much gas would I get ... I have no idea I'm filling my car up and I asked if I could write the check after I filled up. "No," she said and stated the commander's policy is pay before you pump. I asked why the change in policy and she told me they had too many "drive offs" without paying. Okay, this is a real pain - I prefer to use checks versus credit cards. So now the policy is to punish the masses for the stupid mistakes of a few. Here is a suggestion:**

**prepay or leave a valid military id card. That way, if someone drives off you know who they are and for the rest of us that prefer to use checks can do so.**

AAFES is just asking you to do what you're required to do at any other gas station. Sounds like a debit card is a better solution than asking AAFES to track down folks who forget to go back in and pay.